RAIL
OLD AND NEW

Many mature students
are much travelled and
can find education
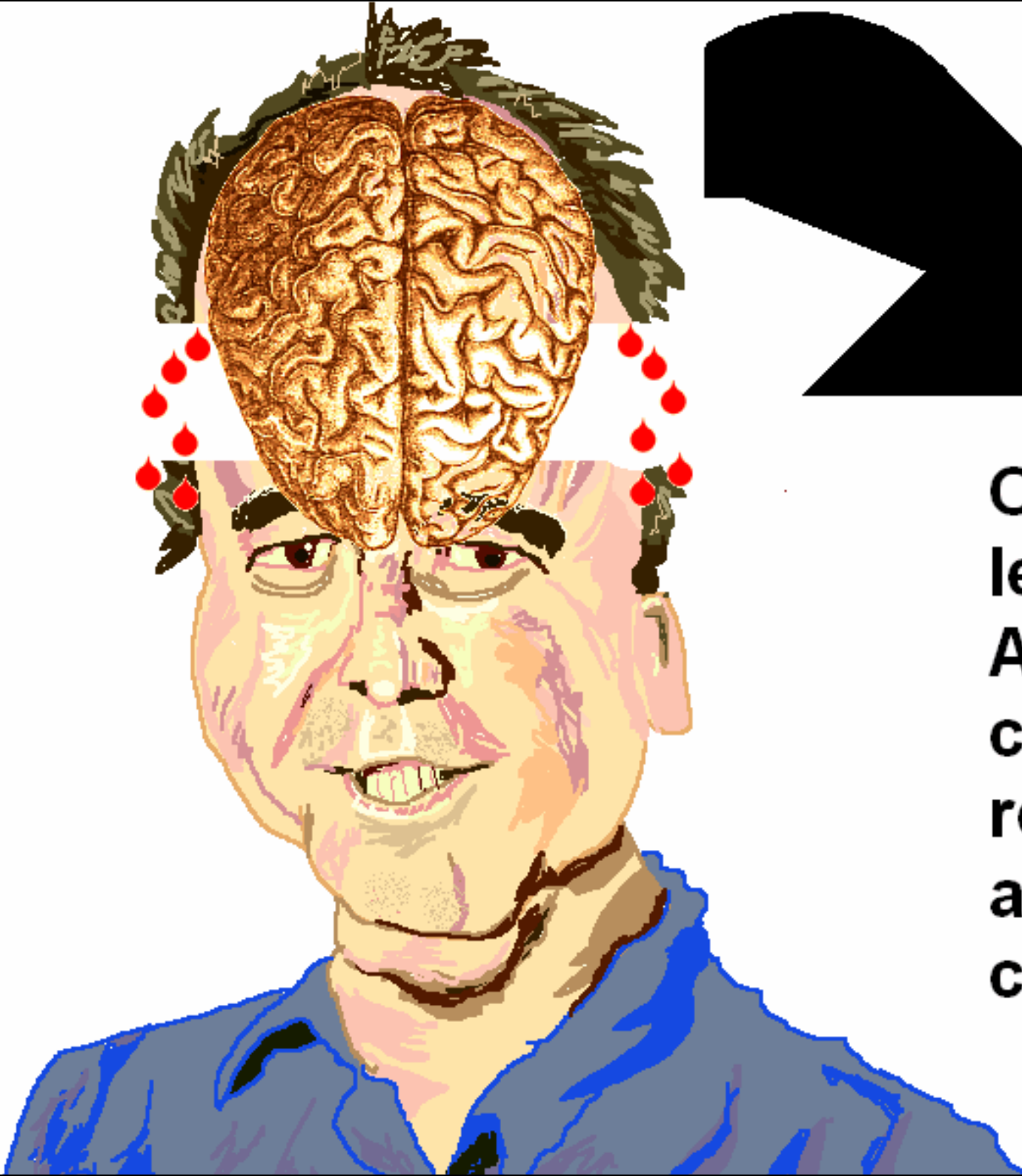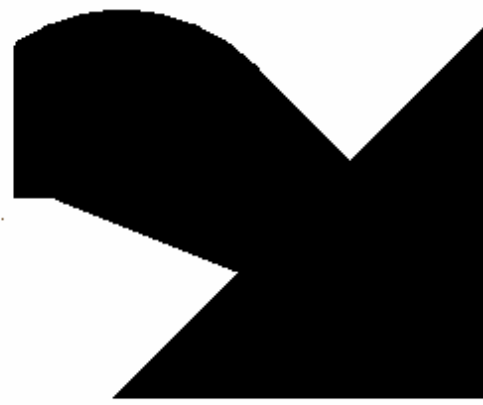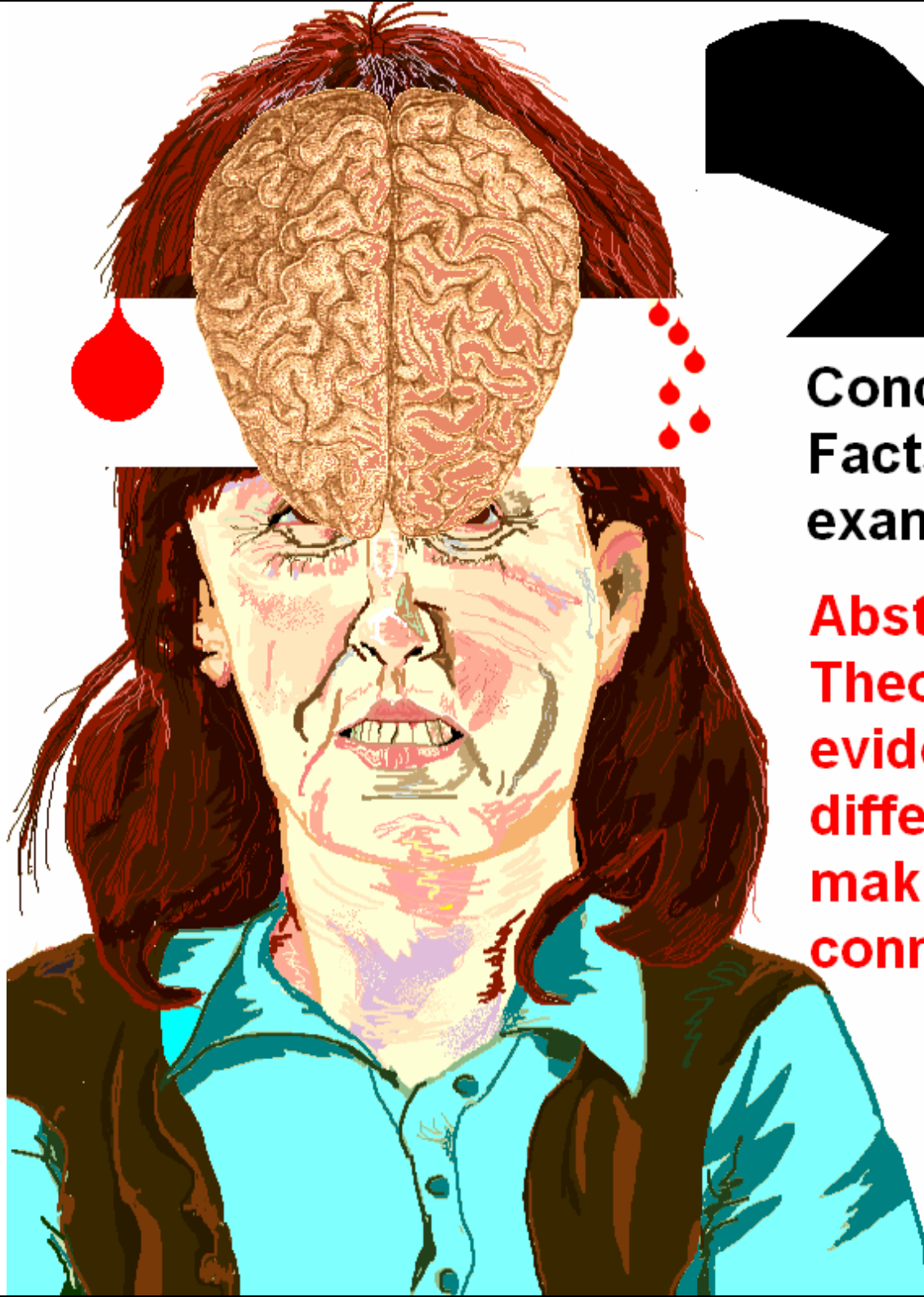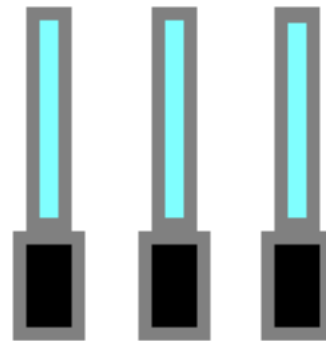distant and daunting
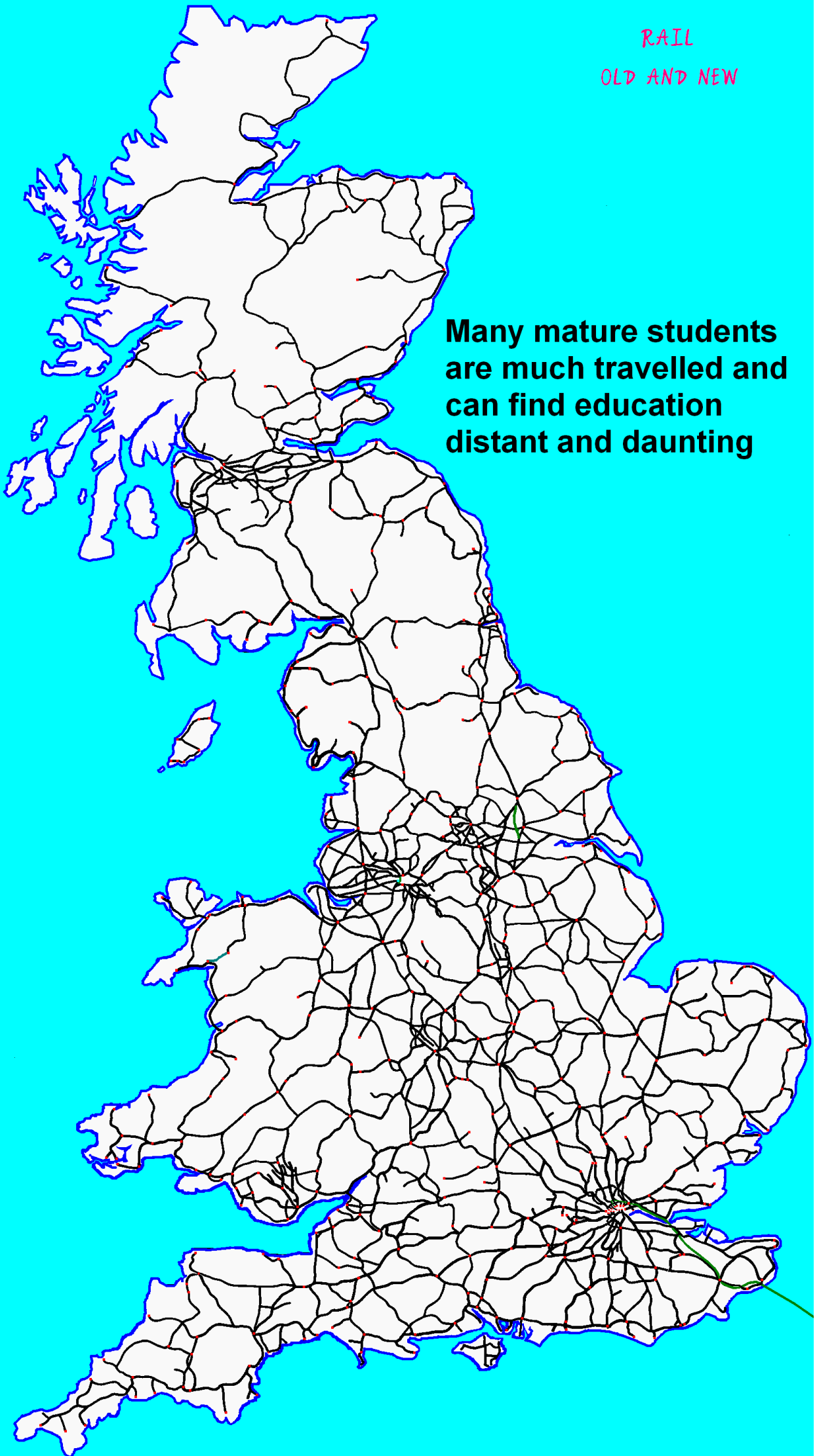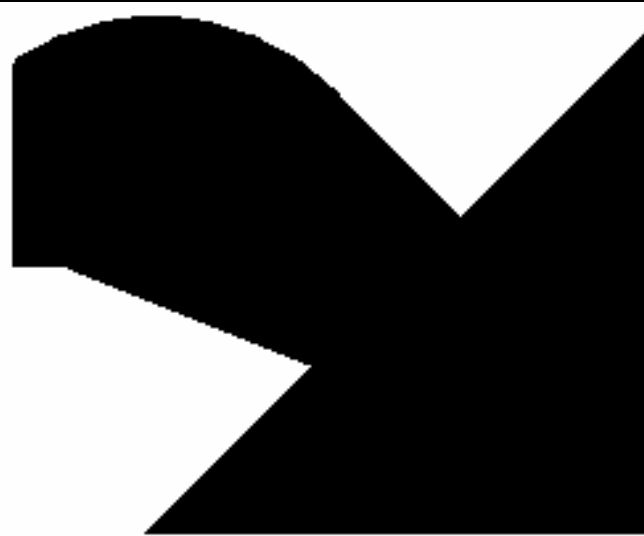
Organising learning: Academic rules, careful researching, analytical and critical writing

Concrete thought: Facts and examples

Abstract thought: Theories and into evidence, handling difference and making connections
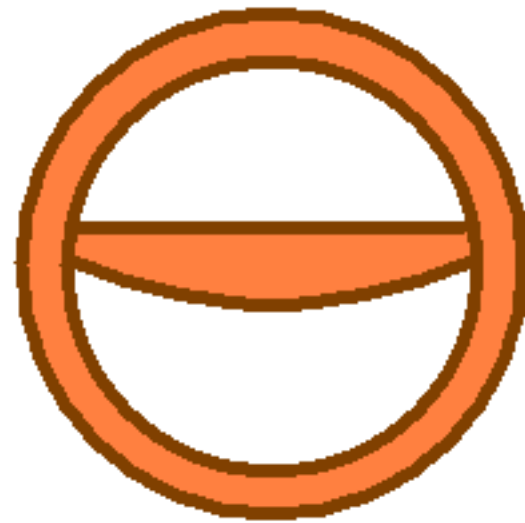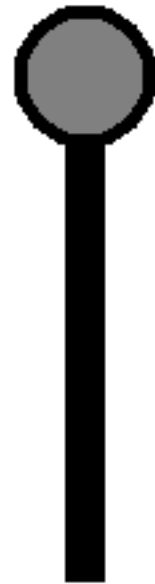
Here is a clip for Harvard referencing: it even puts in the dates and time for last accessed!

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^!Info [L] Copy a URL first then press OK, if URL wanted
^!ClearVariables

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File   Edit   Search   View   Modify   Document   Favorites   Tools   Help

1. anglican history.txt   2. NoName02.txt

Processing

Superscript 1
Superscript 2
Superscript 3
Superscript a
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Text storage
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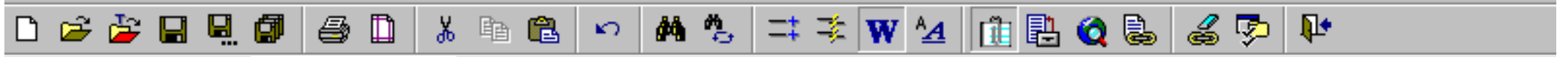File other add to end
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http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=65499

The Church of England now sees itself as a Protestant sect, argues Jonathan Clark
Reformer: Archbishop Thomas Cranmer © n
Reformer: Ard
Cranmer THE
CANTERBURY

"TELL ME abo
fair challenge. Every institution needs an account of its origins, its development, and its purposes. The UN, nation states, political parties, even your local Scouts all need to tell their stories, their histories, if they are to flourish or even survive. They need a "grand narrative", a powerful and convincing story to tell; in addi-

Date bibliography order (dialog box)

Copy a URL first then press OK, if URL wanted

OK

Applications   AsciiArtFonts   AutoCorrect   Conversions   Email   HTML   Making   MS Cleaner   Processing   QRefLibrary

353:1   Ins   NoteTab Pro available from www.notetab.com (see Help...)

Start   T...   C...   N...   D...   Inherited (C:)   Documents and Settings   12:43

http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=65499

The Church of England now sees itself as a Protestant sect, argues Jonathan Clark
Reformer: Archbishop Thomas Cranmer © not advert
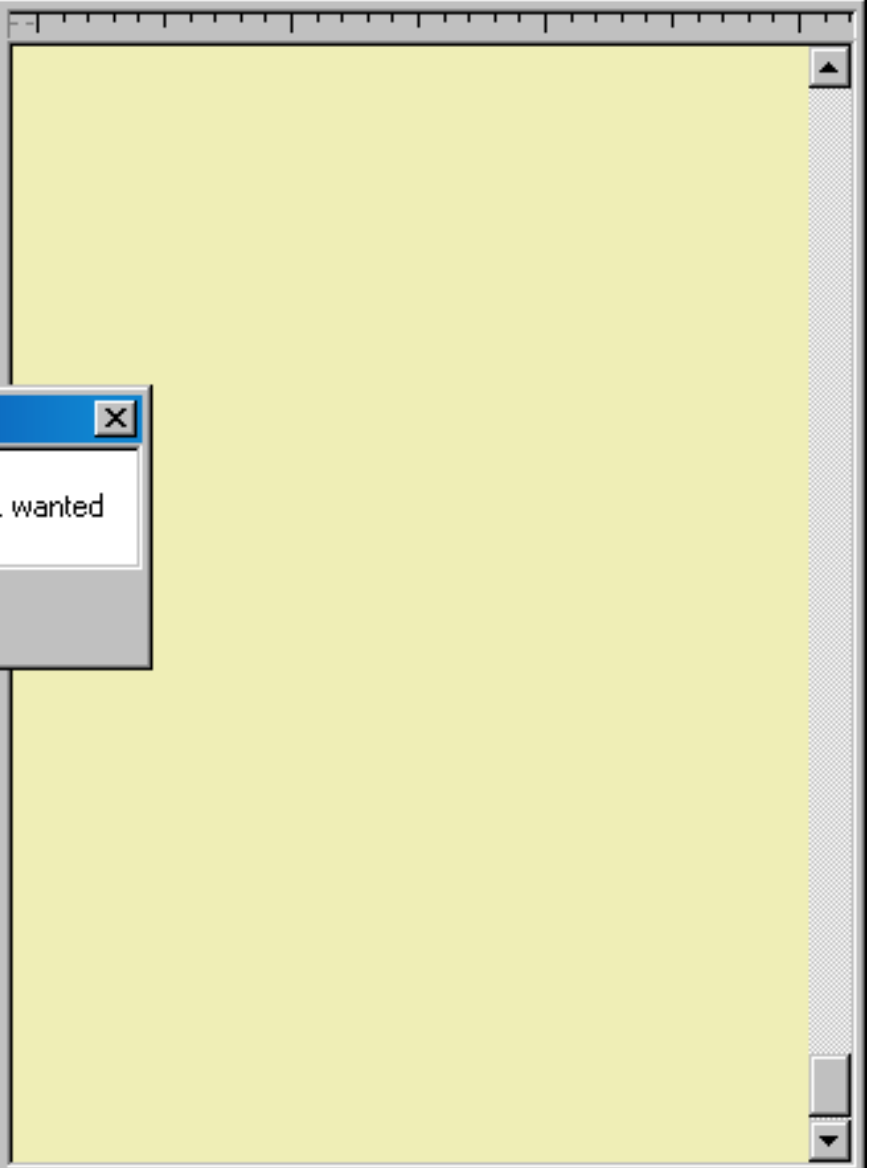Reformer: Archbishop Thomas Cranmer THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
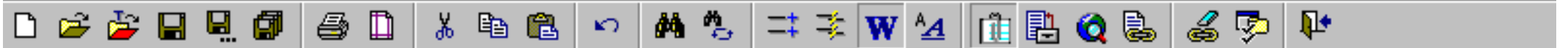
"TELL ME about yourself." It's a fair challenge. Every institution needs an account of its origins, its development, and its purposes. The UN, nation states, political parties, even your local Scouts all need to tell their stories, their histories, if they are to flourish or even survive. They need a "grand narrative", a powerful and convincing story to tell; in addi-

Clark, J. (2008), 'The C of E needs a strong story' in Church Times; November 2008; Volume, Number; pages, Publisher, [Online], Available World Wide Web, URL: http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=65499. [Accessed: Sunday November 23 2008, 12:47]

Study Skills

Information

Person

Resourcing

Information

Booklets
Online
Notes

Interaction

Delivery

Workshop
Drop-in
Email

Co-operation
with Library

Overlap with
Key Skills, ICT uses

Students asking
questions

Formal Sessions

Monitoring work

Liaising with subject facilitators

[Image: 01Bridghead]

As a former sixth form teacher of Sociology, teaching a subject that required the making of abstract mental connections, it struck me that each student needed a level of literacy that allowed them to express arguments; secondly was a possession of effective study skills by which they could indeed gather, assemble and present the necessary arguments. Sixth form was surely a bridgehead to develop abstract thought on the way to Higher Education.

However, students had been used to being processed for exams at GCSE, and in order to meet demanding league table statistical returns on exam success rates, students were further processed at AS and A levels.

One key experience for me was when stood in front of a class and stating to the students, "I am not going to spoonfeed you," and immediately being asked by one student, "Adrian, will you spoonfeed us please." And we did indeed teach what to put in essays and where to put the key paragraphs. We taught students to effectively memorise the paragraphs they wrote, and gave diagrams for where to slot paragraphs into their essays. We did this because students lacked study skills for themselves, and lacked literacy. We didn't teach these building blocks because we didn't have the time. I've been there, and I read the exam results that followed, with reasonable grades that resulted.

In offering myself for this post of HE Study Skills facilitator, I am coming with a recent insight that for many sixth formers, the possession of a good stock of A level qualifications, for which they worked very hard through quantities of material, is no guarantee that they possess either the literacy or the study skills necessary to do undergraduate work. Some do, and some could improve further, but many do not.

[Image: 02Railmapcolour]

And then many mature students come to Higher Education for whom sixth form college is a distant memory if a memory at all. Such students have family commitments and have experienced the world of work: they are well disciplined but education is as good as a new experience again.

These are well travelled students and have been through many multiple routes: as I discovered when HE Research Assistant here, they are full of experience to draw upon and yet probably limited regarding academic disciplines. So whereas the recent sixth formers need assistance beyond a few textbooks and handouts, they are at least practised in some reading, study and writing, whilst many mature learners will need much more guidance and a boost to confidence.

The new demand of self-responsibility at undergraduate level, and the sense of achievement in coming here, may mitigate against students seeking help. It is important therefore that the study skills service is integrated with learning and promoted as more than just an obligation so that students get all the help they require. The importance of self-responsibility comes in the nature of the assistance towards their learning.

We can tell the students, that at school or GCSE they were given an answer, and that at sixth form they were given a few, sometimes contradictory, answers, or that they may have had concrete solutions in their working lives, but now our subject facilitators will be suggesting routes to answers that lead to further questions - about which 'you the student' must do the thinking. And this is the same as saying, "Welcome to the academic community. And here we are to help you learn in how to organise and how to study and how to think for as much and as often as you need."

[Image: 03Manhead]

Coming in to Higher Education we then might say to those who have recently done much academic work, "Do you, who were in the sixth form, remember how you often did not reference your work, when you used someone else's ideas? Well, for them and for all others, 'Welcome to the academic community' means accepting the obligation of the rules of the academic community for its members. As students we learn the academic traditions that we enter, and we always reference the intellectual property that we use. We start to obey such rules, but there is a benefit: that successfully following the rules helps us to organise ourselves. We can say to students, 'At Study Skills we are here to help you efficiently and effectively organise your study, efficiently and

effectively organise your engagement of your brains, so that you, as individuals, can organise your academic life and best produce what is required.' We can say, in addition: 'Your learning is your responsibility: we give all the help we can, but you are your own managers.'

So my policy would be autonomous, interdependent, systematic assistance in liaison with subject facilitators, library staff and others assisting with literacy.

[Image: 04Womanhead]

It is vital that study skills adds value to the subject learning: that integrated with the subjects comes the business of how most efficiently to do the reading, the researching - including that danger-ground called the Internet - and the critical and analytical writing and the presentation. We help to avoid the pitfalls and to produce the best. It was at this Institute, when still Grimsby College, that I said to one student, he has all the information in that essay on screen and needs no more, but if he was to arrange that essay differently the argument would be all the more effective. I was able to be so bold because of my own academic background in terms of the subject, but also because I had myself tackled the business of presenting more effective pieces of writing.

I suggest three stages of priority for the new student.

Students come to induction and initial workshops. At and close to the time of induction we need to press the students to let us know their experience, and as studying begins to let us see their work and their working in the study skills working area. Rather as I did with Key Skills Literacy, when teaching this at Hull College, the first subject work gives the basis for some sort of assessment of existing skills, and indicates where improvement is needed. This becomes, in time, one to one work - facilitating each student. The induction itself involves, of course, signposts to materials available. I would intend to produce some of my own materials, to be put online, especially as common problems emerged. One resource would be simply my email address, for me to be taking a lot of time reading and commenting on student abilities - not what they do but how they do it. Writing essays and other presentations gives a sort of DNA trail of how they did it, and with interviewing this how

can become explicit.

[Image: 05Carcontrols]

The induction should offer hope to students. We can tell them that doing study skills is like learning to drive. At first so much is faltering conscious effort, but if they learn the correct habits of the academic community then they will become good, fluent drivers, capable of handing the work themselves, that an ability to organise and think will mean the task of gaining a degree will be so much more readily accomplished.

The second if overlapping stage is some mass lectures and initial workshops, so that in didactic fashion and some work-alongs students get initial guidance, for example on intended and in ignorance plagiarism. It is the worst academic crime of all, with the most serious of consequences. While there are thieves who steal ideas, there are some who may not know they have done the crime. If a student thinks up an idea, and it was thought up by someone else first, it is no excuse that they did not know and did not reference the idea. This is why they must read and find out what is in the tradition, and when they present the idea to reference it clearly.

Of course cutting and pasting web pages will not do, except as storing material for later reference: In Key Sills Literacy I have seen tourist students learn nothing as they took marketing chunks of text and passed them off as their own work. More than this, the second stage of lectures and workshops needs the learning of navigating the Internet and strategies to discern a good webpage source of information and argument from a lousy one. It's not just about peer reviews but triangulating web pages and other sources: about actually doing the reading and comparing sources that responsible student learning ought to involve.

[Text/ Image: 06Textclip scroll to 07Texteditor1]

Here is a suggestion. I'd like students to have something like text editing software that has clips, pasteboarding and an optional split screen. I use this all the time, and it is free sortware for individuals and even for institutions. In one workshop we could make or insert made clips that set

out the order of Harvard referencing. From then on, every book, leaflet, web page, CD, DVD, whatever, can be referenced according to the relevant clip. Seeing a web page we can highlight the URL and paste that in, and we might put the web text underneath it on the left split screen.

[Image: 08Texteditor2]

On the second screen we can copy across the URL, place it into Harvard form according to the made clip, and on that screen, scrolling down the left one as we go, write a summary and passing over only the most essential verbatim material, indicated as such. We save our own document on the right hand split screen, and discard the left. I suggest this is one way to fully use ICT with the temptation to copy and paste, and yet obey essential academic rules. Such an ICT integrated approach uses Harvard referencing, it is finding a resource, it is thinking critically about resource content and drawing from it, developing one's own understanding and building a personal library, and of course it contains its own way back to the original. Students can build their own electronic resources of critically summarised material when having to write their essays. Some students may want to database their electronic summaries, and there are tree structure text editors that will store according to subjects and dates.

You can see here that I am the considering creative and serving use of ICT. It isn't just a case of going to the usual word processing and spreadsheet software, important as they are, but using what is beneficial to the actual work being done. Certainly I could do what I did when training at SGS Redwood Services: to see and understand, for example how a simple text file of numbers and commas can become a spreadsheet and can become an object pasted into a word processed file, and also the benefits of .PDF (as if printed) files and presentation software for bullet point presentations. For this presentation, I have chosen to use a .PDF - sometimes awkward, sometimes useful for getting those graphics and text into a regular A4 size for printing.

[Image: 09Summary]

The third stage is ongoing support, with, I would hope, liaison with

subject facilitators and other agencies of referral. Here we did a drop in system when I was HE Research Assistant, and even with some ongoing workshops, I still want any student to be confident that they could ask me any question. I would do plenty of one to one work, but also I might generate ad hoc discussions to see if people put their points effectively, or listen in on practice presentations to make my points about style. I would respond to issues by creating resources.

What this Institute would get from me is experience of the problems of acquiring abstract thinking and the means to get it, of a broad subject background that allows me to handle different methodologies that vary the study skill demands, and that I see study skills and literacy as combined issues. There is something else a student might appreciate from me. My view, that I give to all students, is that, despite my experience, I am learning too. I learn when I teach and I am one of them. I am only further up the railway tracks from them, and so I know where they are because I have been there. And so what they receive from me is empathy and understanding, and direct identification. We all make mistakes, but I would hope they have grounds for confidence in me, and the basis for some real student and facilitator interaction, to add value, and to make academics of all of them.